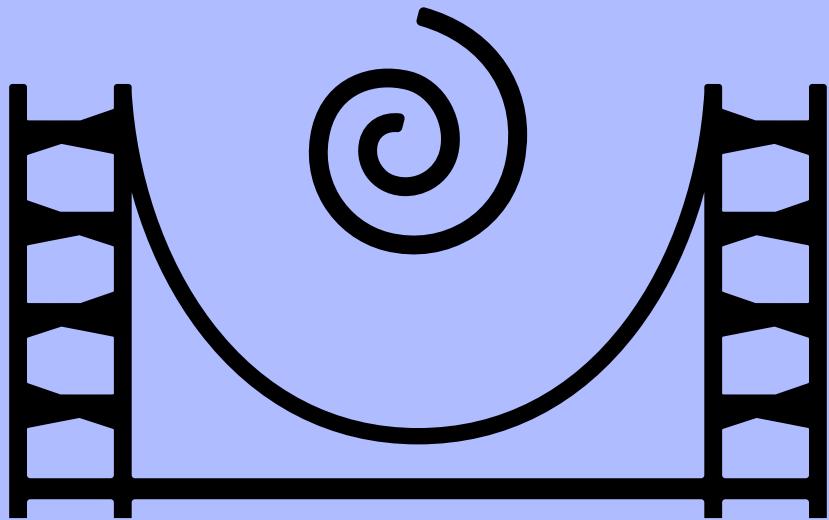
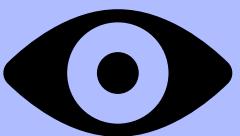
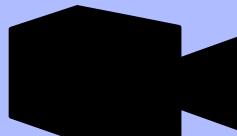
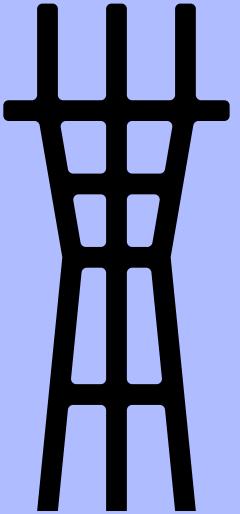
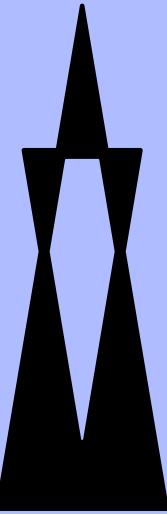
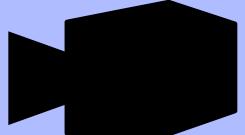
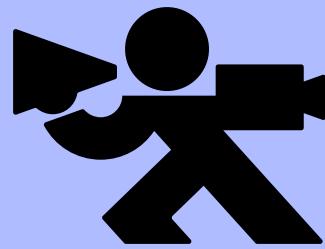




Making Waves: The Rise of Asian America

STUDY GUIDE





Content Written by **Zaha Cheema**
Designed by **Cindy Nguyen, Soph Schultz Rocha, Keith Zwölfer**

All SFFILM Education materials are developed in alignment with California educational standards for media literacy.
SFFILM Education welcomes feedback and questions on all printed study materials.

More info at sffilm.org/education



Made possible with support from [Grants for the Arts](#) and the Svane Family Foundation's *Culture Forward* Initiative.

With additional thanks to our program partners at [SFMOMA](#)

INDEX

About the Film	04
Teaching the Film	04
Pre-Viewing Topics	05
Presenter Bios	06
Discussion Questions	07
Activities	08
Beyond the Classroom	09
Documentary Guide	10
Media Literacy Resources	11
Common Core Standards	12



ABOUT THE FILM

In this urgent and deeply resonant documentary, **Making Waves: The Rise of Asian America** traces the powerful legacy of Asian American activism through the lens of ethnic studies — from the 1968 student strikes in California to the present-day fight against anti-Asian hate. Opening with a group of passionate youth advocating for Asian American Studies in the Texas state capitol, the film travels across regions and decades to uncover the transformative impact of ethnic studies on identity, representation, and political power. Through educators, experts, and a rising generation of student activists, **Making Waves** builds a compelling case for education as resistance. With clarity, compassion, and a strong intergenerational focus, the film amplifies the ongoing struggle to define Asian American identity on its own terms.

Recommended Grades: 4-12

Program Note: This film contains brief news footage of racially motivated violence.

DIRECTORS

Jon Osaki, Josh Chuck

PRODUCERS

Jon Osaki, Josh Chuck

(USA 2024), English, 58 min

TEACHING THE FILM

Jon Osaki and Josh Chuck's documentary **Making Waves: The Rise of Asian America** is a thorough and inspiring documentary about different cities in the United States and their specific struggles to include and amplify Asian American Studies in their schools and communities.

Through conversations with student activists and community leaders, the film follows the journey of the successes and hardships of implementing Asian American Studies. A screening of this film will complement a curriculum in Ethnic Studies, Asian American Studies, Media Arts, and other subjects diving deep into the history of Asian American communities.

SUGGESTED SUBJECTS

Activism

Asian American Studies

Current/World Events

Education

Journalism

Local/Bay Area Interest

Political Science

Social Justice

Sociology



PRE-VIEWING TOPICS

 To prepare for a class screening of **Making Waves: The Rise of Asian America**, ask your students to consider their prior knowledge of Asian American history in the United States. The following prompts are to gain a better understanding of your students' understanding of the subjects covered in the film.

1. How long do you think Asian Americans have been in this country?
2. What contributions has the Asian American community made to our society?
3. Why do you think politicians are against including Ethnic Studies in schools?
4. During early COVID in 2020, did you notice an uptick in anti-Asian discrimination in your community?
5. What do you think about student activism? What is your experience with activism?
6. Do you know about the solidarity between Black and Asian communities in the United States?
7. Do you know the history of internment camps in this country?

PRESENTER BIOS



Jon Osaki CO-DIRECTOR

Jon Osaki is a long-time community leader and award-winning independent filmmaker. He is a native San Franciscan and has served as the Executive Director of the Japanese Community Youth Council since 1996. During Jon's tenure as Executive Director, JCYC has grown to become one of San Francisco's most successful youth organizations, annually serving over 7,000 children and youth from all ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds.

Jon is also an award-winning filmmaker who has directed and produced promotional, educational, narrative, and documentary films. His initial interest in film grew from his desire to raise awareness of critical social justice issues he has encountered over his thirty-year career as a youth development activist. Jon's filmmaking is focused on activism and narrative change through which he has addressed issues such as the targeting of immigrant communities, reparations for the Black community, and the model minority myth. His films have been screened on Capitol Hill in Washington DC, at national policy conferences, the National Judicial College, film festivals, and broadcast nationally.



Josh Chuck CO-DIRECTOR

Co-Director/Producer **Josh Chuck** has served as a community filmmaker for over a decade. He has brilliantly captured the stories of San Francisco's many community-based nonprofit organizations and illuminated their impact through film. In 2019, he released his first feature documentary the award-winning **Chinatown Rising**, which he co-directed with his father Harry Chuck. The film exquisitely weaves together ten hours of unreleased footage of the Asian American movement shot by Harry in the 1960s. **Chinatown Rising** was broadcast nationally on the World Channel's America Reframed series and continues to be screened through educational, theatrical, and community venues.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Where is the birthplace of Asian American Studies?
2. What are the similarities and differences between the Third World Strike in 1969 and the Palestine encampments at universities in 2024, especially the government and universities' response? Can you name any other university protests?
3. What are the lasting repercussions of the Vincent Chin case? How did it affect communities?
4. How was the Asian American movement in the 1960s and 1970s inspired by the Black Panther Party? What are some overlapping concepts?
5. How do you see Asian American and Ethnic Studies expanding over the next decade?
6. What are ways you can get involved in promoting Asian American Studies in your school?
7. Why is it important to recognize the contributions of people of color? For example, Chinese railroad workers were not included in the celebration photo of the completed railroad at Promontory Point. Why not? What are the implications of this?
8. How can you confront anti-Asian hate when you see it happening in your community or school?
9. What makes somebody an ally or proponent of a movement?
10. What are some tools or resources you can use to educate your community about anti-Asian hate?



ACTIVITIES

1. Review this presentation about [Yellow Peril Supports Black Power](#), then have students write a research paper on an Asian American activist whom they are unfamiliar with (ex, Yuri Kochiyama). Have students describe the specific activist's role in the Asian American movement, their impacts on U.S history or current events, and how they expressed solidarity with other social justice movements.
 - Resources: Use the slideshow, internet resources, and the school library.
 - Adjust the length of the research paper and formatting to the specific grade as needed.
2. This unique [interactive timeline from ChangeLab](#) gives important context to the historical events related to the stories of Asian Americans. Use this timeline as a guide to have students draw out their own version with important dates and events from their local community. How do those specific events fit into the overall U.S timeline for racial equity?
3. [Read about the Model Minority Myth here](#). Have students get into two teams of 4, each picking a side, and construct a debate around the model minority myth: Is the model minority myth ultimately good or bad for Asian Americans?



BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

1. Check out the history of “Yellow Peril Supports Black Power” With this [Building Identity and Solidarity: Asian American activism of the 1960s and '70s Resource guide](#).
2. Grace Lee Boggs was mentioned in the film. Check out this [video by Radical Cram School](#) that dives deeper into who she was and her legacy.
3. Explore this [visual history of campus protests in the United States](#).
4. Learn more about [AAPI Youth Rising](#) and connect to a local chapter.



DOCUMENTARY GUIDE

What is a Documentary?

A documentary is a film whose goal is to capture truth, fact or reality as seen through the lens of the camera. But there are many kinds of documentaries, and not everyone's idea of truth is the same. The Scottish filmmaker **John Grierson** coined the term "documentary" in 1926 to describe American filmmaker **Robert Flaherty's** romanticized culture studies, but nonfiction filmmaking dates back to the earliest motion picture reels.

The definition of documentary expanded as filmmakers experimented with technology and the goals of nonfiction. Avant-garde documentarians, like **Dziga Vertov** in the 1920s, believed that the mechanical eye of the camera gave a truer image of reality than the human eye and pointed his lens at newly industrialized cities. **Leni Reifenstahl's** propaganda films from Nazi Germany used the nonfiction form to convey a political message, a slanted truth.

The international cinema vérité or observational movements of the 1960s attempted to remove authorship from the documentary. The observational filmmaker hovered like a "fly on the wall" watching the world without commentary. Modern documentaries often seek to raise awareness about a social, environmental or political issue, guiding their audiences toward civic participation and activism.

While watching a documentary, it is important to remember the core concepts of media analysis: who made the film, for what audience and why? The nonfiction format can be deceptively subjective, as all filmmaking involves an inherent selection process: in the images that are shot, the music and narration that accompanies them and, most significantly, the way in which they are all edited together. Media literacy means always analyzing a documentary for its message and authorial intent.

Even though they are nonfiction films, most modern documentaries structure their content around a traditional story arc: with a beginning, middle, and end, as well as characters, and a conclusion, theme or thesis to impart to the audience. Documentary filmmakers begin their projects with an idea or an issue that they wish to explore more deeply. Through research and planning, they develop a comprehensive plan before they begin shooting.

A BRIEF TIMELINE OF THE DOCUMENTARY

1895

The Lumiere brothers develop the first motion picture film reel, capturing brief unedited clips of life around them called 'actualities.'

1900-1920

Travelogue or 'scenic' films become popular showcasing exoticized images from around the globe.

1926

Dziga Vertov, with the Soviet Kino Pravda movement, released the experimental nonfiction film, **Man With A Movie Camera**.

1939

John Grierson collaborated with the Canadian government to form the National Film Board of Canada, with the initial goal of creating Allied propaganda in support of war.

1960s

The 'cinema vérité' movement began in Europe, followed by the 'direct cinema' in the US. Portable cameras and sync sound allowed filmmakers to capture intimate footage with minimal intervention.

1968

The Argentine film, **La Hora de los Hornos**, opened the door to activist cinema of the 1970s, using film as a tool to counter capitalist politics in Latin America.

1988

Independent Television Service (ITVS) was founded.

2000s

The widespread use of digital cameras and editing software made the documentary medium more affordable to independent filmmakers.

Present Day

The term 'documentary' comes to encompass a wide range of nonfiction cinema. Contemporary filmmakers continue to push the boundaries of truth in film and to explore new avenues and applications for the medium.



MEDIA LITERACY RESOURCES: SCREENING WITH MEANING

We live in a world where technology mediates a large portion of human interaction and the exchange of information. Every projected image, every word published on a page or a website, and every sound from a speaker reaches its audience through the language of the medium. The ability to parse the vast array of media messages is an essential skill for young people, particularly in a mainstream commercial culture that targets youth as a vulnerable, impressionable segment of the American marketplace. Many students already have a keen understanding of the languages different media use and the techniques they employ to inspire particular emotions or reactions, but they often lack the skill or awareness to fully deconstruct the messages they continuously receive. Analysis of a media message, or any piece of mass media content, can best be accomplished by first identifying its principal characteristics:

1. **Medium:** the physical means by which it is contained and/or delivered
2. **Author:** the person(s) responsible for its creation and dissemination
3. **Content:** the information, emotions, values or ideas it conveys
4. **Audience:** the target audience to whom it is delivered
5. **Purpose:** the objectives of its authors and the effects of its dissemination.

Students who can readily identify these five core characteristics will be equipped to understand the incentives at work behind media messages, as well as their potential consequences. Media literacy education empowers students to become responsible consumers, active citizens and critical thinkers.

MEDIA LITERACY STANDARDS

MEDIUM

All Media Is Constructed.

- What is the message, how is it delivered, and in what format?
- What technologies are used to present the message?
- What visual and auditory elements comprise the media content?
- What expectations do you bring to the content, given its medium, and format?

AUTHOR

All Media Is Constructed by Someone.

- Who is delivering the message?
- Who originally constructed the message?
- What expectations do you have of the content, given its author(s)?

CONTENT

Media Is A Language For Information.

- What is the subject of the media message?
- What information, values, emotions or ideas are conveyed by the media content?
- What tools does the author employ to engage the viewer and evoke a response?
- To what extent did the content meet your expectations, given the format/author?

AUDIENCE

All Media Messages Reach an Audience.

- Who receives the message?
- For whom is the message intended?
- What is the public reaction to the media content and/or its message?
- What is your reaction to the media content and/or its message?
- How might others perceive this message differently? Why?

PURPOSE

All Media Messages Are Constructed for a Reason.

- Why was the message constructed?
- Who benefits from dissemination of the message? How?
- To what extent does the message achieve its purpose?
- What effect does the message have on the audience it reaches, if any?



COMMON CORE STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6-12.1

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources (connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole, 11-12th)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6-12.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text (and makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas, 11-12th).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.1-8C

Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6-8.2

Determine the central ideas or conclusions of a text; provide an accurate summary of the text distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.8

Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.5

Analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the structure an author uses in his or her exposition or argument, including whether the structure makes points clear, convincing, and engaging.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.7

Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of using different mediums (e.g., print or digital text, video, multimedia) to present a particular topic or idea.